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ABSTRACT

There is a growing conviction that out-of-school programs can play an important role in improving student achievement. Both government and private sources are investing in them. This report focuses on the expanding prevalence of after-school programs in California, and profiles their nature and the demands that they face. Funding has been increased for such programs to help them provide academically focused and enriching experiences for students. Connecting these programs with measures of academic achievement is a relatively new policy focus. School and community partnerships are essential in making out-of-school programs effective in raising academic achievement. Examples of programs are given to illustrate how varied they are in focus, scope, and operation. Evaluation of program efficacy is still in its infancy as data are just starting to become available from student test scores and the knowledge and experience provided by community-based organizations. The very diversity of programs also presents assessment challenges. To make programs effective, they must have clear and consistent structures and goals, appropriately trained staff and management, ongoing evaluation, good leadership, and stable, adequate funding. Evidence exists that well-implemented after-school programs positively affect student achievement. (RT)

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REPORT
February 2002

EdSource

Clarifying Complex Education Issues

ED 463 593

Expansion of Out-of-School Programs Aims at Improving Student Achievement

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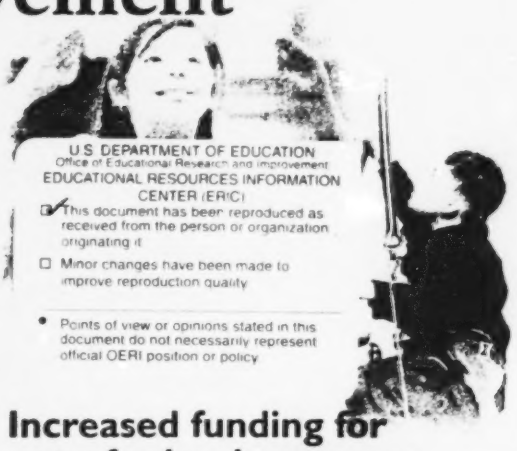

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Photos in the collage are courtesy of LA's BEST After-School Program and San Diego's "6 to 6" Extended School Day Program.

Photos on the following pages of this report are provided courtesy of the out-of-school programs they illustrate.

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For many years, schools and communities have worked together—and separately—to support student learning outside the regular school day. But the recent push for standards-based reform in the K–12 school system is having important and far-reaching effects on the nature of after-school programs.

First and foremost, the conviction is growing that such programs can play an important role in efforts to improve student achievement. As a result, both government and private sources are investing more heavily in them. This infusion of support is bringing resources as well as validation to the work of after-school advocates. It is also increasing the opportunities schools and communities have to work together and create strong partnerships. In return for that investment, however, both public and private funders are demanding that the connection between out-of-school program participation and academic performance in school be more rigorously evaluated and documented than has been done previously.

This report focuses on the expanding scope and prevalence of after-school programs in California, and profiles the nature of these programs and the demands they face. It examines the context and research that underlie this trend, including the ability of schools and other community organizations to work together effectively. The report also looks at what is known about how out-of-school programs affect student achievement in school. Finally, it raises issues to consider as California contemplates investing more heavily in them as a strategy for helping young people succeed.

Increased funding for out-of-school programs puts focus on academics

"After-school programs have exploded into the nation's consciousness," said child-care policy expert Michelle E. Seligson in a 1999 commentary published by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation. Those words have become even more accurate in the years since.

Government support begins increasing in 1998

From 1998 to 2002, government funding for after-school programs has grown exponentially. So have the number of school-based programs and the numbers of students involved. In California, two major catalysts for this expansion have been the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, and the state's Before and After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Program. For the 2001–02 school year, their funding is expected to exceed $200 million, supporting after-school activities in as many as 20% of the state's public schools.

The federal program sets the standard

Since 1998, the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program has become the national centerpiece of efforts to strengthen the quality and increase the number of after-school programs. As the grant application puts it, CLC "enables school districts to fund public schools as community education centers—keeping children safe in the after-school hours and providing academic enrichment, homework centers and tutors, and a range of cultural, developmental, and recre-

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ational opportunities. In addition, lifelong learning activities are available for community members in a local school setting."

Through 2001, the three-year grants went to rural and inner-city public schools or groups of schools, allowing them to plan, develop, and expand after-school services. Schools must work with community partners and submit grant applications that specify the scope, hours, and cost of the program they envision. Each CLC grantee must also complete an Annual Performance Report that evaluates the local program based on specific criteria. The focus of these evaluations has changed since 2000, and today the criteria include specific measures of student achievement. Beginning with the 2002 federal budget, community-based organizations will also be able to apply for funds. However, Congress has decided to transfer the management of the programs to the state level. In the future, the California Department of Education (CDE) will handle the awarding and administration of these grants.

The CLC program started with $100 million in grants to 86 grantees. This funded 295 centers in rural and inner-city schools across the United States. By November 2001, the total number of grants nationally had grown to 1,587, and 6,697 centers were in operation. California school districts operated 775 of them, with total funding exceeding $105 million for new and existing programs. For the federal fiscal year 2002, the program budget totals $1 billion nationally. State officials estimate that $45 million will be allocated to California for new programs. Local providers will not receive these funds until at least July 2002.

Just as the program requires public/private partnerships, CLC itself has modeled that concept through a partnership between the federal government and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. This arrangement, which has been described as "unprecedented," was in place from the inception of the program. The Mott Foundation provides grantees with funds for staff training and technical assistance and, in addition, supports evaluations, analyses, and outreach for the CLC program generally.

California steps forward

California state leaders invested $50 million to create the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program (SB 1756) in 1999. By 2000–01, 155 grantees and 963 schools were part of the program. Its budget of $87 million served about 100,000 students. In the final 2001–02 budget, state leaders expanded the program to include a before-school component and added $30 million to support that expansion.

As the 2002 legislative year began, the saliency of these programs became even clearer. While proposing an austerity budget for California in 2002–03, Gov. Gray Davis nevertheless recommended a $75 million expansion in the Before and After School Partnerships Program.

The state effort supports the establishment and continued operation of local school-community programs for students in grades K–9. All must operate at a school site or recreation area adjacent to the school. The programs must include both academic support, such as tutoring and homework assistance, and an enrichment component that includes recreation and prevention of risk behaviors such as drug abuse and crime. Programs can be operated either on regular school days, or during any combination of summer, intersession, or vacation periods.

Local education agencies (LEAs)—which include school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education—may apply for grants. Cities, counties, and nonprofit organizations may also apply if they are in partnership or have the approval of an LEA. Only the LEA or another public agency can serve as the fiscal agent for the program. Programs must match the state funds with local dollars from another public or private source. The three-year grants are renewable.

Funding for the program is based on a daily amount per student served. There is also a maximum grant amount per site, with some provisions for additional funding at elementary schools with more than 600 students and middle schools with over 900 students. All programs must be open a minimum of three hours per day and at least until 6 p.m. on every regular school day.

Elementary students must attend every day, while middle school programs may institute a flexible attendance policy as long as students attend a minimum of nine hours and three days per week. Summer and intersession programs must operate a minimum of three hours per day.

Along with complying with the state regulations for operating hours and program elements, participants are required to submit annual outcome data that must include measures for academic performance, attendance, and positive behavioral changes.

Out-of-school programs are a relatively new policy focus

These two new government-sponsored programs are not the first to fund child and youth development or out-of-school activities, but they are significant for connecting the programs more directly to measures of students' school achievement. And while the push for educational improvement helped increase the focus on organized after-school programs, the trend did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, according to Seligson and others, it was one of three converging movements, the other two being welfare reform and crime prevention. "The three movements share an emphasis on targeting poor children and youths," Seligson says, "and this has brought after-school programs to the political forefront and placed them in the center of a policy debate."

While this high-profile focus on after-school programs may be relatively new, it takes place in the context of more than two decades of experience. The need for better alternatives for school-age children after school has grown steadily since the 1970s, but no cohesive public policies existed to respond to that need. As a result, it was addressed in what Seligson characterizes as "an idiosyncratic manner," even among programs that took place on school campuses. She adds that until recently, "the unique qualities of school-age care garnered little attention from policymakers or most educators."

Support for public funding and a more comprehensive approach to after-school programs is a recent but increasingly powerful phenomenon. In 1997, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that the percentage of public schools offering before- and/or after-school care had increased from 15% to 30% between 1988 and 1994. In a 2000 poll conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, 38% of voters said that the biggest problem facing children today is that they are alone and unsupervised. This was an increase from 26% who said so just the year before. In California, public sentiment may be gauged in November 2002. Petitions for a proposed ballot initiative are currently circulating that call for the expansion of state funding to make grants for before- and after-school programs universally available to every public elementary and middle school with a qualified application. The initiative specifies that the approximately $550 million needed to do so would come from outside the regular K–12 funding guarantee (a.k.a., the Proposition 98 minimum funding guarantee).

Rural areas face special challenges

Prior to the creation of the federal CLC program, research showed that rural areas had great difficulty creating school-community partnerships in support of after-school programs. This was largely due to the small number and limited resources of potential partners. For this reason, the federal CLC program established rural schools as a high priority.

Despite their bucolic settings or small-town appearances, rural communities are often beset with big-city problems. Three California communities with CLC programs demonstrate the point. All three communities have higher than average unemployment and multigenerational families on welfare.

- In Modesto, a city of 192,000 in California's Central Valley, a diverse group of kids—including African-American, Asian, Latino, and white youth—face inner-city problems of drugs, alcoholism, gang activity, unemployment, high dropout rates, high mobility, and one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state, says CLC Project Director John Ervin. (See the program profile on page 15.)
- Rural Lake County in Northern California has one of the highest teen pregnancy and juvenile crime rates in the state, according to former CLC Director Shannon Smith. (For a profile of this program, see www.edsource.org/edu.cfm and click on Models and Partnerships.)
- The Northern California town of Eureka has a population of only 24,000 but has not escaped big-city drug problems, says Lois Beachy, school/community resources coordinator for the Eureka City School District. In some Eureka schools, up to 95% of the children receive free- or reduced-price lunches, she says. (See the program profile on page 23.)

In all three areas, CLC programs serve youth with inner-city problems, but the settings and challenges differ by community, and program directors need to craft unique solutions. The federal funding approach—which one director described as "here you go; let us know how it's going"—has offered directors the opportunity to be both creative and responsive to local problems as long as they do their evaluation homework.

The need for after-school activities is well documented

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), in a Fact Sheet published in 2001, cites a compendium of research indicating that:

- Nationally, approximately 8 million children ages 5 to 14 regularly spend time without adult supervision.
- Children without adult supervision are at significantly greater risk of truancy from school, stress, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior, and substance abuse.
- The hours immediately after school are when young people are most likely to commit or become victims of violent crime, to engage in high-risk behaviors, and to be killed in a household or other type of accident.

California's after-school programs do not meet the need

According to a 2001 Children Now report, *After School Care for Children: Challenges for California*, about 1.2 million California young people, ages 5 to 14, could use a subsidized after-school program. (This represents about one-third of young people in this age group and was derived by looking at the number who both have parents/caregivers who work more than 30 hours per week and live in low-income families.)

In 2000–01, federal and state funds from the CLC and After School Partnerships programs provided spaces for about 228,000 California children and youth.

The Afterschool Alliance calculates that, in 2001 alone, 202 California communities that applied for 21st Century Community Learning Center grants were not accepted due to insufficient funds. Those programs could have served an additional 282,800 young people.

Schools and communities are both essential for raising academic achievement

Existing after-school programs, including those located on school campuses, vary dramatically in their configuration, staffing, sources of support, goals, and measurable outcomes. Some are school-administered, some are run by community-based organizations (CBOs), and some are joint efforts. The programs are specific to each location, reflecting the age of the students, the skills of the staff, the interests of the funding organization, and often the constraints created by limited resources. At their simplest, they are essentially daycare centers for school-age children, for which parents pay a fee. At their most sophisticated, they represent a dynamic, authentic school-community partnership that brings both public and private resources to bear in order to strengthen community, improve schools' effectiveness, and develop the potential of the young people they serve.

Increasingly, the push is to place after-school programs within this larger context of school-community partnerships. Advocates of this approach say that schools cannot meet today's expectations for high student achievement by themselves, especially in those communities with the neediest children. In places where families struggle to provide food and shelter, low-wage jobs are common, parents' education levels are low, and distrust of public school is high—or where children are surrounded by violence and crime—community development is an essential element of improving academic achievement. If these deeper problems facing youth are not addressed, students cannot walk through the school house doors ready to learn.

Even if one assumes that the community development work has been done—and children arrive at school well-rested, well-fed, free from fear, and eager to learn—schools still face a daunting challenge attempting to teach students who come to school with learning deficits. Raising student performance requires that students spend extra time on task and that more adults are engaged in teaching and mentoring them. In addition, more creative and innovative instructional strategies are important for engaging, motivating, and promoting success with students who have not been well served in the traditional school setting. After-school programs represent an important extra opportunity to both teach and motivate young people.

Many CBOs have long recognized the latter point and have run after-school programs aimed at engaging young people in enriching learning experiences. Programs run by grassroots community organizations and neighborhood centers, and by local affiliates of national youth organizations—such as Boys & Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, 4–H, Campfire, and Boy Scouts—have done just that for generations. They have generally had only tangential ties to schools and their academic programs. Most do not operate on school grounds or have any program-oriented contact with educators. Increasingly, other community organizations with a "learning-oriented mission" have developed their own independent programs after school as well. Museums are one example. In some communities, churches have taken a leadership role.

School-community partnerships differ in strategy but share common goals

The term "school-community partnership" can be applied to a wide spectrum of programs with different purposes. The same is true of the potpourri of programs that fit under the umbrella of "after-school time" or "extended day." The boundaries between different types of programs often blur. Many programs serve multiple purposes and fit multiple definitions.

The wealth of school-community partnerships and programs currently in operation throughout California has developed over time. These programs have been built by many different kinds of organizations, including public schools, civic-minded business groups, child advocacy organizations, private foundations, churches, and community-based groups. These efforts share a common core concern: young people are not being adequately supported and prepared for adult success. They all attempt to bring additional resources to bear to address that concern. And they also generally share a common goal—to help schools increase student achievement and success. What differs, as the flow chart shows, is the problem that they choose to focus on and the central strategy that they consequently use. While it is helpful to group these programs into three different types, as done here, doing so admittedly oversimplifies a rich and complex picture.

Common Concern:
Youth not adequately prepared for adult success.
Perceived Cause:
Students do not come to school ready to learn.
Strategy #1:
Family/Community Development
Strengthen family support by building capacity, addressing basic health/ welfare issues, and improving services.
Perceived Cause:
Schools do not have resources or expertise needed.
Strategy #2:
School Reform
Bring community resources to bear to strengthen and improve educational process and services.
Common Goal:
Improve students' academic achievement.
Perceived Cause:
Students spend too much of their time unproductively or negatively; their potential is lost.
Strategy #3:
Youth Development
Create programs that engage students in meaningful activity, motivating them to learn and decreasing the likelihood of negative behavior.

- One set of programs emphasizes community building that will strengthen families' ability to support student learning. These often take advantage of the convenience and credibility of school as a place to provide community services and do community development. They are built on the premise that poor health and other basic human welfare issues create a major obstacle to student achievement. Parent education, including English language instruction and parenting skills, are common offerings. They often also provide after-school care and activities. Healthy Start is a prime example in California.
- Another group focuses on school reform as the path to improved student achievement. Extending the school day—through a variety of different strategies—is one area of focus. They also do a lot to strengthen school programs and resources more generally. In urban areas, this can involve an active restructuring of the school bureaucracy to better respond to the community. Business support of school-to-career programs, often with student internships after school, is another example.
- The third type of program focuses on child and youth development more specifically by providing young people with positive environments outside of school in which they can develop their abilities and interests and participate in meaningful activities of their choice. For publicly funded programs, an early catalyst was crime prevention. From the outset, some of these programs focused specifically on giving young people extra learning time and extra academic help. That is increasingly the case now, particularly with new governmental support.

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Out-of-School Program Profiles

Below is an index to the 10 short profiles of after-school programs included in this report. More detailed information on these programs can be found on the EdSource website at www.edsource.org/edu.cfm and click on Models and Partnerships.

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Sacramento START 21

Mono County After-School Program 22

Eureka After-School Program 23

These organizations often find that they can make a bigger difference in the community, draw more resources, and help students learn more effectively when they work with the schools. In addition, funders are asking for evaluations that measure success, at least in part, based on traditional academic skills. This is increasing the pressure on CBOs to find ways to develop partnerships with their local schools.

Particularly in urban areas, CBOs can help schools be more effective as well. Because they are rooted in the community and school personnel often live elsewhere, these organizations offer a bridge between families and schools. They can help parents feel more comfortable engaging with the school, and help the school staff better understand the community and the needs of its children.

Whether a school or a CBO operates the after-school program, the goal is to put additional resources to work in support of young people's success. School-community partnerships are essential to doing that, but such partnerships demand reciprocity. Community groups are not content simply helping the schools achieve their mission. Their interests are often served by initiatives that envision school buildings as community centers, as a focal point for children's and families' lives. Schools appear to be a natural conduit for services because every community has one and they are familiar places. In addition, based on the traditional school calendar and their core use, they provide a physical plant that is often under-utilized on evenings, weekends, and in the summers. And facilities are an expensive resource CBOs typically need. On the other hand, school officials struggle with the extra pressures this extended use creates in terms of staff time, maintenance issues, and security concerns. They also face serious challenges finding the capacity and resources they need to assure that the school is effectively meeting its core educational objectives during the regular school day.

After-school programs vary widely in focus, scope, and operation

Many out-of-school programs have grown out of initiatives and partnerships with a broader focus, whether that was school improvement, community development, or youth development. They have also been sponsored, developed, and run by a potpourri of different public and private agencies. All have had improving student achievement as an important end-goal. However, their focus and operations are quite varied, as is the extent to which they use academic measures to gauge their success.

A hodge-podge of locally initiated programs came first

In many urban areas of California, programs were started to address youth development goals, specifically after-school care and extended learning opportunities. While community-based organizations were active partners, these programs typically had a strong affiliation with the school and its mission. Often the key staff members were regular-day teachers willing to take on an additional paid assignment after school.

Among the best known and most thoroughly evaluated of these programs is LA's BEST. In other cities, most notably San Diego and Sacramento, the state's large urban school districts spearheaded similar after-school operations. In some cities, such as San Jose, city government joined forces with multiple school districts to sponsor homework centers and strengthen the ties between existing recreation programs and schools. San Francisco voters in 1991 approved the San Francisco Children's Amendment and taxed themselves to create a special fund dedicated to children's services, with out-of-school programs being one component.

Many business partnerships have also included after-school activities as part of larger strategies. From high school career academies supported by a national partnership to uniquely Californian efforts like Workforce Silicon Valley, these programs have succeeded in bringing more resources to schools. In terms of after-school activities, they usually focus on teens and offer work experience, mentoring, and internship opportunities. In a different kind of business initiative, some corporations have supported after-school programs because of child-care issues that affect their employees.

Private organizations began scaling up their efforts

While schools were adding after-school care to their list of services, many community-

based organizations began looking more seriously at ways to help their young clientele improve their academic performance.

Some of the best examples of this come from outside California, and many have received support from private foundations. The Boys & Girls Clubs, for example, is a national network of neighborhood-based facilities that serve some 2.8 million young people ages 6 to 18. It has developed a series of programs for building academic skills, enhancing educational opportunities, and exploring career options. Among its efforts is Project Learn, which was created with foundation support to "reinforce and enhance the skills and knowledge young people learn at school." A formal evaluation found that the program boosted the academic performance of participating club members.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation began a community-education movement more than 60 years ago in Flint, Michigan. Central to this movement, and thousands like it across the country, is an emphasis on broad-based community involvement in education. Bridges to Success, a program in Indianapolis that initially provided non-academic services, was started by the United Way of Central Indiana.

The eight San Francisco Beacon Centers are neighborhood centers run by local agencies and housed in public schools. Created in 1996 through a collaboration between private foundations, the City of San Francisco, and the school district, they provide programs and classes for children and adults. The centers are open after school, on weekends, and in the summer.

Numerous other public and private efforts have focused on developing out-of-school programs that can be adopted wholesale or easily adapted for local use. Some are from for-profit corporations. These initiatives typically build academic skills generally, hone in on a specific curricular area such as reading or math, or use a prescribed program or strategy. Johns Hopkins University's Review of Extended Day and After-School Programs and Their Effectiveness, published in 1998, describes some of them, including:

- **The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program,** a cross-age tutoring program begun in San

Los Angeles

LA's BEST After-School Program

Number of schools: 101 elementary schools.

Number of young people served: 17,500.

Funding: Total of $17 million, primarily from the state and the city.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. Staff help students complete homework, talk to them about where they are getting stuck, tell teachers where individual kids are having problems, and ask for additional homework in that area. The site coordinator asks the school's teachers and principal how they want to communicate.

Nonprofit learns from the private sector

LA's BEST (Better Educated Students for Tomorrow) is the granddaddy of on-site after-school programs in California. Carla Sanger, president and CEO, has been with the program since its inception in 1988. Over those 14 years the structure of the organization has changed substantially.

Sanger initially used a more traditional nonprofit structure until consultants advised her to build a management infrastructure similar to the private sector, she says. (Currently the corporation and operation management structures together use about 15% of overall funding.) About nine years ago, the new mayor told Sanger to expand the program (then in 29 schools) by creating a fund-raising rather than an advisory board. She balked because she liked her board, but then hired a consultant and eventually developed two boards—a governing board of prestigious people and essentially the same advisory board of educators. "Now my job is to make sure the governing board listens to the advisory board," Sanger says.

Program offers fun as well as literacy help

Sanger strongly believes that after-school programs should not replicate school but build on the interests of the kids. She gives the example of "girly girls" who "did not want to do anything." The site coordinator asked them if they had all the money they wanted and could do anything, what would they do? They said, "Go to the mall." "And what would you buy?" "Nail polish." The site coordinator started a nail polish club. The girls researched which kind of polish adhered the best, lasted the longest, and had the most reds, among other findings.

For children who are behind in reading, Sanger relies on high school students, trained in a research-based literacy program, as one-on-one tutors. The preliminary results, she says, are very positive. "We take the stigma off remedial classes after school, which students weren't attending, by putting classes taught by hip, cool high school students in the after-school program," Sanger says.

Evaluations show improved grades, attitudes, and test scores

The UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation has regularly evaluated LA's BEST. The center's most recent report on the program, released in June 2000, is available at www.lasbest.org/learn/eval.html. The center found that after the second year in the program, students' overall grades improved in math, science, social studies, reading, and writing composition by 28%, with a range of increase by subject from 24% to 32%. Science showed the greatest improvement. The center also found that 85% of the children said they liked school more since participating in LA's BEST. Students also had higher redesignation rates to English proficiency, were absent fewer days, and showed positive achievement on standardized tests.

While schools were adding after-school care to their list of services, many community-based organizations began looking more seriously at ways to help their young clientele improve their academic performance.

Antonio, Texas. Students in the program were found to be less likely to drop out of school and to score higher on measures of reading ability, self-esteem, and attitudes toward school.

- **University-Community (UC) Links (formerly Fifth Dimension)**—a program developed at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC) at University of California–San Diego—exists at 31 sites and is tied to California university campuses. This university-run program uses undergraduate students as tutors and emphasizes computer-based instructional materials.
- **Books and Beyond** is a voluntary reading program for students in grades K–8. Originally developed as a supplement to regular school reading programs, it is used extensively in after-school programs all over the United States. The California offshoot is called California Reads. A rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of California Reads when used after school has yet to be conducted, though program representatives say they are making plans to do so.

In 1999, California's James Irvine Foundation launched an "ambitious and innovative experiment." The CORAL initiative—Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning—guides and supports local communities in the development of a comprehensive approach to out-of-school learning customized to meet local needs. The mission of the CORAL project is to "improve academic achievement in grades K–12 by mobilizing families and aligning communitywide networks of enriching out-of-school resources to support student learning." This initiative is currently underway in five California cities: Pasadena, Long Beach, Fresno, San Jose, and Sacramento.

Ongoing evaluation is an integral part of the CORAL approach. Working with researchers from SRI International, the project has developed a "theory of change" that outlines the program's assumptions regarding how out-of-school education activities and increased community support can lead to improved student achievement. The program evaluation will test those assumptions. It will also measure participants' progress in establishing the desired services and making them accessible and useful for children and their families. However, the entire effort is ultimately aimed at improved academic achievement, and that is the measure by which it will be evaluated in the long run.

Other government-funded programs interact with after-school efforts

Prior to the creation of the major publicly funded after-school initiatives, and even in the years since, both the state and federal government have also supported other related programs. These are less clearly targeted to students' school achievement. Instead, they emphasize improving the delivery of health and human services, community development, or child and youth development as necessary components of school success.

California's Healthy Start focuses on coordinating the delivery of out-of-school services

California's initial foray into state funding of out-of-school programs was the Healthy Start Program started in 1991–92. In its first decade of operation, Healthy Start provided funding for 635 operational grants at 1,368 schools. Healthy Start supports local education agencies—in partnership with other local government and private agencies—by providing seed money for integrating and coordinating a variety of services and placing them at or near school sites. These services—which are developed by the participants based on local needs—can include such activities as adult education, tutoring, health care, mental health counseling, job placement services, and recreational programs. The Healthy Start grants provide temporary funding, and the programs are expected to eventually become self-sustaining.

Designed to serve children, their families, and the community more generally, Healthy Start has several goals. In terms of youth-oriented services, the program seeks to ensure that "each child receives the physical, emotional, and intellectual support that he or she needs—in school, at home, and in the community—to learn well." Community development is also a core goal, as Healthy Start seeks to build the capacity of students and parents to become participants, leaders, and decision makers in their communities. Finally, Healthy Start has focused on the reform of services delivery, with the hope that schools and other child- and family-serving agencies could streamline and integrate their programs to make them more effective and efficient.

An initial evaluation after the first three years of Healthy Start, released in 1996, concluded that the local programs were accomplishing much that they had set out to do. The findings were also used to create a guidebook for local evaluations. Among the components they are required to report are "mandatory education results" for schools as a whole and for the group of students directly served by Healthy Start programs. The measures include student attendance, behavior, and performance on standardized tests.

Along with the measurable components of success reported formally to the state, anecdotal information makes it clear that Healthy Start achieved another important goal for some. In programs such as the one in Chula Vista, school officials and leaders of community organizations learned about the challenges and rewards involved in creating true collaborations that pooled resources and expertise in support of young people. This and other school districts have used their Healthy Start experience as a steppingstone for creating other community partnerships, including the state and federally funded after-school programs.

Other programs separate child-care and academic-enrichment funds

At approximately the same time that California began investing state funds in after-school programs, state leaders also created an extensive, separate group of academic intervention programs. Each pays for additional instructional time for a particular group of students in specified curricular areas. They are strictly academic in focus. The projected funding for 2001–02 exceeded $350 million, and state regulations are clear that these funds are not to be considered part of the 50% local match required for After School Partnerships Programs. The interventions must be offered outside the regular school day, however, whether that means after school, on weekends, in the summer, or during intersessions at year-round schools.

Government has also made a substantial—albeit separate—investment in child-care programs and subsidies, totaling about $2 billion in state and federal money in 2001–02. Some of these funds are for preschool and some for school-age students, and they pay for many types of services.

San Diego

San Diego's "6 to 6" Extended School Day Program

Number of schools: 202 (All elementary and middle schools in the city.)

Number of young people served: About 25,000.

Funding: A total of $17 million with $8.5 million from the state, $4.1 million from the city's General Fund, $2.4 million from the federal government (21st Century Community Learning Centers grants), and $2 million from tobacco lawsuit settlements.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. Working with the site coordinator, teachers staff the homework part of the program. Many other teachers, for a small stipend, teach subjects that interest them like art or cooking. In addition, teachers offer reading, writing, algebra, science, and other courses to students who need extra help. Principals have the right to say they want a new provider agency or a new site coordinator. The centers have school textbooks, and coordinators are typically aware of the assigned homework. If kids complete all their homework for the week, they are rewarded with a chance to tackle a mobile climbing wall that travels from school to school.

City offers before- and after-school program in every school

While LA's BEST is known as the granddaddy of after-school programs in California, San Diego's "6 to 6" is called "the brat" because in two years (beginning in 1998) the city put together an after-school program in every elementary and middle school—something Los Angeles has yet to achieve. The issue was a primary one for San Diego's mayor at the time, who was a single mother. A grassroots church-based coalition also lobbied aggressively.

The city was able to move so quickly because it used parks and recreation money combined with tobacco lawsuit settlement funds. "The city had a parks and rec program that was one or two adults guarding balls," says Deborah Ferrin, child-care coordinator for San Diego. "On rainy days, the kids came but not the leaders. We grabbed that money to start the program."

But even with such blanket coverage, about two-thirds of the elementary school children who need after-school care cannot find it. Some schools have waiting lists of 100 to 150. Students are selected based on need, using criteria such as income and whether they are in a single-parent household. However, middle schools are able to take everyone who wants to come. To attract the often hard-to-get middle school crowd, the program uses marketing techniques such as brochures, videos, and public announcements to "bombard" youth with information about "6 to 6."

The program is called "6 to 6" because it generally runs from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Ferrin says the before-school component, often missing in other programs, provides breakfast, homework help, and quiet enrichment activities. "It gets kids to school and parents to work on time," she says.

Test scores rise and attendance improves

External evaluators found that third and eighth graders in the after-school program moved up to grade level very quickly in reading and math. However, no comparison was done between kids in the program and kids on the waiting list. Also, 57% of the students sampled showed improvements in their Stanford-9 reading scores, and 44% showed improvements in their Stanford-9 math scores. The before-school component has reduced tardiness, improved attendance, and promoted school readiness, Ferrin says.

The work of developing hard, quantitative data that documents direct linkages between these programs and school achievement is in its earliest stages.

These programs do not require any coordination with school instruction, but most offer time for homework. Licensing and regulation is through the California Department of Social Services.

By contrast, revenues generated by the California Children and Families First Act of 1998 (Proposition 10) are targeted, by law, to prenatal services and to programs for children under age 5 and their families. In 2000–01, the program was expected to provide more than $650 million for state and county activities. Its overarching goal is school readiness.

Several federal programs focus on disadvantaged youth

While 21st Century Community Learning Centers is the only federal initiative focused solely on after-school programs, the U.S. government sponsors a number of grant programs that can include out-of-school activities. Targeted at disadvantaged youth, they demonstrate how funding streams with a number of different purposes all contain some resources that can be used to support programs held after school. Some major ones include the following:

- **Safe and Drug Free Schools** is designed to prevent violence in and around schools. It was also created to strengthen programs that prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, that involve parents, and that coordinate with related federal, state, and community efforts and resources. To the extent that after-school programs are an important vehicle for meeting those goals, this federal program provides support for them. Some funds go directly to service providers and some are distributed through a state grant program.
- **The Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP)** supports one-to-one mentoring programs for "youth at risk of educational failure, dropping out of school, or involvement in delinquent activities, including gangs and drug abuse." Both public school agencies and public/private nonprofit organizations can apply for three-year grants through this program, which logically takes place almost exclusively after regular school hours.
- **GEAR UP—Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs**—is dedicated to creating college opportunities for at-risk youth. It provides grants to states and directly to local partnerships. This enrichment program works with an entire grade level of students at a school, beginning no later than 7th grade, to make sure they can and do take the rigorous high school course work they need to prepare for college. Although emphasizing the regular school-day curriculum, it includes tutoring and mentoring components that take place after school either on campus or in appropriate community facilities.

Two new federal pilot programs may further extend the government's commitment. Both the Cultural Partnerships for At-Risk Children and Youth, and the Drop-Out Prevention Program were started in 2001 with $2 million and $5 million respectively for demonstration grants.

Combining programs and resources is a hallmark of federal and state programs

Both the federal CLC and California's After School Partnerships programs encourage local participants to leverage additional resources available in their communities. This includes the whole range of private and public programs enumerated above.

Regarding the federal program, the Afterschool Alliance says the grants as they existed prior to 2002 "allow programs to link together other streams of federal funding" like literacy, service learning, and USDA after-school snack money as well as state and local funds. They also allow programs to "leverage local funds through partnerships with community-based organizations and local public agencies that use the federal funds for match requirements or to demonstrate diversified funding to attract more resources." To provide this flexibility, the federal allocation is meant to fund a local program vision, as described in the grant application. The grant must be configured within a broad set of approved strategies and with a strong evaluation component. This process leaves locals to decide how the funds will be used and how the program will be run, holding them accountable for doing what they promised.

Based on its 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the federal government will provide funds to states using a block grant approach. This represents a

major change in how federal funds have come to states. For the CLC program it means moving from the current national grant competition to a state-based program.

The California program has been configured somewhat differently, including in particular its funding approach, which provides a set amount per student participant. In their proposal for taking over CLC, California Department of Education (CDE) officials recommend that funding for the federal program be changed to the same per-pupil allocation approach the state program uses, but at a slightly higher amount. The CDE also recommends that federal grantees comply with the state program requirements for hours of operation. (The table on page 12 provides a quick comparison.)

Some local program operators and state experts in the youth development field are concerned that these changes could be detrimental to local programs. They say they could limit flexibility, especially affecting some programs' ability to attract and serve those students who are at highest risk of academic failure. Others see the requirements as a means for guaranteeing that the programs are effectively attracting students and that students participate often enough to truly benefit. The CDE will continue to develop the regulations for state operation of the CLC program throughout the spring of 2002, working with an advisory group. The State Board of Education must approve the final recommendation before it goes into effect, hopefully prior to the 2002–03 school year.

Evaluations start to go beyond implementation and best practices

The experiences gained through operating after-school programs over the past two decades have convinced many local educators, community members, youth advocates, and now policymakers that these programs are important to student success. However, the work of developing hard, quantitative data that documents direct linkages between these programs and school achievement is in its earliest stages. This reflects several challenges. For one, such data only recently became generally available as a result of the increased focus on standards-based reform.

Long Beach

CORAL–Long Beach

Number of schools: Five elementary schools and one intersession site for students on vacation.

Number of young people served: Over 800, including 35 high school students from the Youth Institute who work as aides and benefit from the program.

Funding: Core funding from the James Irvine Foundation for seven years at $2 million a year. Three sites have state funds, and one site has multiple funders. Irvine also funded $75,000 for pre-planning and $500,000 for planning.

Coordination with schools: All but one of the programs is on a school site. Teachers serve as education liaisons and train team leaders on managing classrooms, developing curricula, and teaching math and English. Teachers also share resources and develop projects to ensure that out-of-school programming is linked to state content standards. Site coordinators make sure their staff and the school's teachers talk about homework. If a child says he has no homework, he gets CORAL homework so there is no incentive to avoid the assigned school work. Teachers can put together their "dream programs," such as botany clubs or hiking trips.

Conference encourages community vision

The CORAL (Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning) project is a unique approach by one foundation to determine if building community capacity through out-of-school programs will lead to improved academic achievement for that community's children.

At Long Beach, program developers created community buy-in by holding a conference before the grant was written.

"It can't be the grant writer's vision," says conference organizer Julie O'Donnell, professor of social work at California State University–Long Beach. "If you write the grant and then try to get people involved, people feel left out and are less invested in the goals and key principles of the project." The conference also focused on team building and collaboration skills.

After the conference, the lead agency (YMCA) and representatives from all the sites being considered for CORAL funds held monthly meetings. There were also site team meetings at the individual school sites. The organizers encouraged parents to come by giving them a $20 stipend to cover transportation and child-care costs and by providing a free meal.

Long Beach program will provide rich data

The Long Beach program, implemented in 2001, is likely to be one of the most thoroughly evaluated programs in the country.

O'Donnell is working with parents, school personnel, and agency staff to design a peer review process that will provide feedback on all the sites and for all the agencies providing programs.

SRI International is doing a separate evaluation of the Long Beach program for the Irvine Foundation. Kathleen Hebbeler, an SRI evaluator, says she is using multiple measures, including Stanford-9 scores, teachers' reviews, after-school staff reviews, grades, and an online assessment program.

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California and federal after-school programs differ		
Component	**California's After School Partnerships Program**	**Federal CLC Program (in California)**
Total funds in 2000–01	$87 million	$105 million
Estimate of participants served in 2000–01	100,000 students, grades K–9	58,000 students, grades K–12; 13,000 adults
Provisions or proposed provisions beginning in 2002		
Basis for funds/allocation	Per-pupil amount, with a maximum amount per school site.	Minimum grant $50,000. Formerly based on needs identified in grant application, no maximum. CDE proposes core funding be based on per-pupil amount as with state program, with $25,000 for start-up and evaluation costs.
Length of grants	3 years, renewable	3 to 5 years, one time
Required hours of operation	After school—A minimum of 3 hours a day, until 6 p.m. Elementary schools: students must attend every school day. Middle schools: students must attend at least 9 hours and 3 days. Before-school—1.5 to 2 hours every school day.	Formerly flexible, based on local needs. CDE proposes aligning with the state program requirements for hours per day and days per week.
Mandatory program components	Enrichment component, including recreation and prevention. Education and literacy component that provides tutoring or homework assistance in core subject(s).	Opportunities for academic enrichment, including tutorial services; and a "broad array" of additional services, programs, and activities that reinforce and complement the academic program. May offer literacy and educational programs to families.
Selection criteria	1) 50% local funding match. 2) Must either be LEA or in partnership with LEA. 3) Priority to schools with 50% or more of students receiving free/ reduced price lunch.	1) Local match encouraged but not required. Match may not be derived from other state or federal sources. In-kind contributions permitted. 2) CBOs, as well as LEAs, are now eligible for grants. 3) Priority to rural and inner-city schools.

Also, it is difficult to assign credit for an outcome like school achievement when it can reasonably be attributed to many causes, including not only after-school programs but also in-school reforms, new accountability systems, and the like. Finally, it is difficult to generalize about programs that are, by their very nature, extremely diverse.

In an October 1998 *Review of Extended-day and After-school Programs and their Effectiveness*, Olatokumbo S. Fashola of Johns Hopkins University captured the implications this variation of program type has for evaluation. "Although the benefits to be derived from the use of the after-school hours seem great, the most effective ways to capitalize on this opportunity are not well understood, and existing after-school efforts vary enormously in purposes and in operations. They range from purely daycare, to purely academic, to purely enrichment programs, to various mixtures of these. Also, their costs vary greatly, as some programs can be very expensive and may

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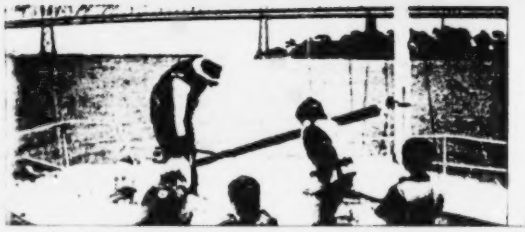
take resources that could be used more appropriately for other investments."

The substantive evaluations of after-school programs that have been done—and there were several between 1997 and 2001—largely focused on implementation. They are important because they shed light on what qualities of an after-school program seem to contribute to positive outcomes for participants and to what extent existing programs exhibit those qualities.

With a wealth of fledgling and established programs to examine, these reports summarize key lessons learned to date about after-school programs generally and those created through school-community partnerships in particular. Taken together, they make a strong case for the value of after-school programs as well as documenting the dramatic unmet need. They also highlight the components that make up effective after-school programs and that set them apart from the regular school day or from extended-day programs aimed solely at academic interventions. Among these is providing students with multifaceted, engaging experiences that address recreational and cultural needs as well as academic ones. In this area in particular, community-based organizations have rich knowledge and experience to offer, particularly as it relates to the research and knowledge about youth development. (See the box on page 14 on youth development.)

Programs young people choose share distinctive characteristics

In *Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development*, researcher Milbrey McLaughlin focuses on the "intangibles of student achievement." These attributes, which are very much a part of the youth development paradigm, include student motivation, self-efficacy, confidence, and optimism. The study examines CBO-sponsored after-school programs that teen-age students themselves characterized as effective. Although from relatively impoverished backgrounds, the teens included in the study achieved at higher levels and had higher expectations for their academic careers than young Americans generally, an outcome the study attributes directly to these CBO programs.



San Francisco

Boys & Girls Clubs of San Francisco: Treasure Island Club

Number of schools: Eight clubs in San Francisco. Only one—Treasure Island—is located on a school site.

Number of young people served: Base membership throughout the city is 4,000, but all kids (ages 6–18) do not come all the time. Treasure Island has 100 elementary school members, with 35 to 40 children showing up each day.

Funding: Wide range of funders, both public and private, including cities, federal government, private foundations, and individual giving. The operating budget for all San Francisco clubs is $7.8 million. The annual cost for Treasure Island alone is $163,839.

Coordination with school: On school site. On Treasure Island the club works closely with school staff. They provide homework help, but they do not tutor in the sense of re-teaching a lesson. The club has an in-box at the school, and the club unit director gives teachers forms to provide feedback. One staff member works at the school each day as a teacher's aide or playground supervisor.

Unique program includes a sailing club

The Treasure Island Club was created because of the efforts of a homeless coalition, which pushed for low-income housing and an after-school program after the Navy gave the San Francisco Bay island to the city. Treasure Island incorporates the national club's Project Learn, which features "Power Hour," a time after school to focus on homework.

Children are drawn to the club through an art program, a talk group for pre-teen girls, and a unique program that allows club children to sail for free on weekends as well as when the club is open. Kids have entered sailing competitions through this program.

Staff works hard to coordinate with teachers

"We made the message very clear that we're here to support the teachers and that we share the same goal," says club Unit Director Sharah Nieto, who has a mailbox at the school and meets regularly with teachers and the principal. At the beginning of the school year, Nieto gives teachers forms they can use to refer students to the clubs or report particular problems they are having with club children. Teachers can use club staff to relay messages to parents when they come to pick up their children.

"Teachers and parents can also use the club for leverage," Nieto says. Kids who behave well at the club but are not "good citizens" at school or at home can lose club privileges.

Program reduces in-school behavior problems

Behavior problems at school have been reduced since the club began, Nieto says. The school principal and teachers were so pleased with the effect on the children that they gave the club an additional room for the program. The club does not have parental permission to access all of the children's grades and test scores, so they do not have statistics to show whether there have been improvements in those areas.

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"Youth development" defines a process

The Community Network for Youth Development (CNYD) defines youth development as "the process through which all young people seek ways to meet their basic physical and social needs and to build knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in adolescence and young adulthood."

In its Youth Development Guide: Engaging young people in after-school programming, the CNYD explains that research regarding youths who are raised in "high-risk" environments and become successful adults shows that their ability to succeed is the result of their resiliency. Further, researchers found that resiliency was the result of three critical elements in youths' lives: caring relationships; high, clear, and fair expectations; and opportunities for participation and contribution.

Resiliency research, combined with practitioners' knowledge from the field, has been used to create a list of the key experiences that young people need in all settings in order to develop into healthy adults. Per the CNYD Guide, these include:

- Physical and emotional safety: so young people feel secure and can take risks that help them grow;
- Multiple supportive relationships: where young people receive guidance from adults and emotional and practical support from both adults and peers so that they learn to connect;
- Meaningful participation: through which young people experience real involvement and decision making so they are able to take on leadership roles and gain a sense of belonging;
- Community involvement: where young people gain an understanding of the greater community so they feel able to make an impact in and be a productive part of their community; and
- Challenging and engaging learning experiences: through which young people build a wide array of skills and competencies and experience a sense of growth and progress.

This research has formed the basis for youth development practices and strategies that have been encouraged by both the federal CLC and state After School Partnerships Program. These are generally accepted guidelines and criteria for effective after-school programs that have both youth development and academic success as objectives.

The programs included in the study, McLaughlin notes, are "intentional learning environments" that share some common characteristics:

- They are "youth centered," which means they respond to and build their programs based on teens' diverse talents, interests, and skills. This is in contrast to programs that operate on the premise that they need to first address teens' deficiencies, what McLaughlin calls the "fix and learn" approach. Also, successful programs reach out aggressively to let youth know about their activities, and they give young people leadership roles in determining how the programs operate and evolve.
- They are "knowledge centered," so learning how to do something is a key reason for young people to get involved. The focus of these programs is clear and intense, whether they are about sports, the arts, entrepreneurship, or community service. They offer quality instruction and content with the curriculum "embedded" in meaningful activity. Young people are taught by multiple "teachers," including not only professional staff, but also senior citizens, other community members, and peers.
- They are "assessment centered," with regular cycles of planning, practice, and some relatively high-stakes performance. They require students and staff to make a serious, long-term commitment. Feedback and recognition for participants are routine parts of both the day-to-day activities and the culminating events.
- The essential element, according to McLaughlin, is that they constitute a caring community for the young people they serve. By participating in these programs, teens find safety, relationships they can trust, clear rules, shared responsibilities, and constant access to caring adults who become part of their lives. Effective organizations also provide "social capital in such forms as introductions to community leaders, tips on jobs, meetings with local businesspeople, and contacts in policy and service systems."

Common themes emerge regarding effective practices

Several of the other research reports come to strikingly similar conclusions, though they ask the question differently. They look at what is necessary to implement an effective out-of-school program or they evaluate youth-oriented programs and community partnerships based on set criteria.

The nature and structure of the program itself is vital

Across study after study, experts describe effective after-school programs as having clear, consistent structures and goals. Those encompass the actual program activities offered and the expectations for young people's behavior and commitment.

Just extending regular school activities is not sufficient. Out-of-school programs need to be fun and appealing to participants, an experience they eagerly anticipate. In its CORAL project, the Irvine Foundation describes five key elements or types of activity that should be included: academic, cultural and artistic, recreational, citizenship, and vocational.

Further, many experts believe that effective after-school programs must pay attention to the health, safety, and nutritional needs of their participants. The challenges can range from providing a safe facility and ensuring healthy snacks are available, to providing the kind of on-site health services that are part of California's Healthy Start program.

Staff and management are central to program quality

The best-planned program is only as good as the people who make it happen. Thus, staff training appropriate to the specific program and its goals is crucial.

Finding, paying for, and retaining quality staff is a big challenge for after-school programs. Several studies indicate it is also of critical importance. Educational levels and student-to-staff ratios are the two variables that appear to make the most difference in the quality and effectiveness of after-school programs. Also, high staff turnover rates—which are common in the after-school environment and seem to be directly related to low pay—can be devastating to program quality.

A related personnel issue concerns program management and governance. This is not just a question of skilled leadership, though that is vital. Programs also need effective systems for general management, budgeting, fund raising, and communications if leaders are to do their jobs well. Yet these systems are often an afterthought in programs begun by people whose first passion is to serve the needs of young people.

The professionalization of out-of-school programming is happening gradually. For example, after-school programs can now apply for accreditation through the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA), a voluntary membership organization. Its accreditation system is based on standards developed with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, and was created to promote and recognize skilled staff and high-quality programs.

Modesto

Modesto After-School Program

Number of schools: 10 elementary and two middle schools.

Number of young people served: 1,200; target students in the lowest quartile in grades and test scores.

Funding: Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant of $2.6 million is the primary funder for five sites; the county is the primary funder ($2.2 million) for seven sites. Total cost: $5.5 million over three years.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. Teachers put their homework assignments in a center box at the school for after-school staff to pick up. The center has the same books the school uses. The program includes a tutor during the school day for students sent to on-campus suspension. A teacher from the school staffs the program on elementary sites.

Mixing hip-hop and homework works

In Modesto, a diverse group of kids face inner-city problems, including one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state, says Project Director John Ervin.

Ervin draws kids to the centers by appealing to their interests. He immediately lured 100 students to each of his two middle school programs by offering a hip-hop dance club after they spent time doing homework.

Initial community buy-in pays off

When the program began in 1999, Ervin contacted community groups right away. He also began organizing parents to address problems in the community. "We got a lot of community buy-in when we started," he says. "I stay involved with the community, meeting with people, building relationships. I built trust. They'd see me two or three times a month. Then people started calling me. We use partnerships to try to expand the number of programs." At one school, Ervin partners with the sheriff's department to provide "midnight basketball" from 5 p.m. to midnight on Saturday nights. Crime and graffiti are down in both the school and surrounding neighborhood.

Evaluation shows positive results

Dropout and pregnancy rates are down in both middle schools. In one middle school the number of pregnancies has dropped from 12 in 1997 to three in 2000–01. That school also received a Governor's Performance Award for gaining 40 points above its growth target on the Academic Performance Index (API). School staff shared their cash award with the after-school program staff.

In evaluation results reported in January 2002, every first grader showed improvement in reading and math on report cards. By fourth and fifth grades, however, the number of kids improving tapers off. For fifth graders, 44% improved their English grades and 47% their math grades. The statistics may point to the importance of catching kids when they are young. "We started the elementary school programs in 2000," Ervin says. "The kids in the higher grades were already so far behind. The ones who started with us early are doing well."

A majority of the children in all grades improved their Stanford-9 scores. In addition, a survey of teachers found that 83% of the students improved in turning in homework, 78% improved in school attendance, and 72% had better class behavior since participating in the after-school program.

Out-of-school programs that measure their success based on improving student academic achievement need staff members who understand the curriculum goals of the school....Experts caution, though, that a firm command of youth development issues and theory is equally important.

Some after-school operations build staff training and any credential expectations into the budget. For example, some programs require the director to be a certificated educator. But the costs of upgrading staff expertise and training can be substantial. For programs that have historically operated on slim budgets, the change requires an increase in funds, and in many cases, a change in mindset as well.

Staff need to understand academic and youth development practice

Out-of-school programs that measure their success based on improving student academic achievement need staff members who understand the curriculum goals of the school. In many instances, regular day teachers staff or manage after-school programs. At a minimum, staff need to be able to work in close cooperation with educators at the local school. The school, in turn, needs to help ensure that program staff understand the state's academic standards, down to specific expectations by grade level and subject matter when necessary.

Experts caution, though, that a firm command of youth development issues and theory is equally important. The strongest approach is for school and program staff to have a shared expertise that integrates knowledge in the fields of education and social work.

Ongoing evaluation is a new but needed requirement

The experts also stress that program evaluation needs to be done routinely, and it needs to be based on the agreed-upon goals for the program. This recommendation is increasingly built into the requirements for both publicly and privately funded programs.

At a minimum, after-school programs must substantiate that they have met funder requirements regarding the program they promised to offer. Beyond that, many are now expected to evaluate their organizational effectiveness in areas ranging from outreach to resource allocation to customer satisfaction.

To the extent that academic achievement is a program goal, even a long-term goal, then funders expect that it too will be measured. In recent years, schools in California have come under more intense scrutiny through the state's accountability system. That scrutiny has included a narrow focus on student achievement, as measured primarily by performance on statewide tests. This test-based measure of school effectiveness has recently been given additional impetus through the federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In working with school officials on after-school programs, CBOs are likely to feel this pressure around high-stakes accountability from their school partners. On the other hand, a program's youth development goals are important, and evaluations need to measure progress toward these goals as well.

Communication and cooperation make all the difference

The literature on after-school programs also indicates that it would be shortsighted to create programs that are run exclusively by schools or by CBOs. As has been noted, much of the expertise regarding effective programs lies outside the world of education. In addition, after-school programs provide an ideal opportunity for community development and for the creation of school-community partnerships. Such collaborations are also likely to be the only way that adequate resources can be brought to bear to meet a need observers agree is tremendous. Similarly, CBOs cannot reach their goals for young people without having the schools involved. They need to work closely with educators if they are to build an understanding of the academic challenges today's students face. Schools can also provide much-needed management skill, financial stability, and facilities.

Research shows that the best programs, whether run by a school or CBO, have strong links with the community generally. This includes informal connections as well as formal inclusion on advisory boards and in other governance capacities. Working in concert, local government, community-based organizations, families, religious organizations, and schools can maximize their resources in support of the young people they all serve.

As consumers who choose whether or not to use the services, students and their parents should also be part of the program planning. The challenge of convincing older students to attend these voluntary programs makes this particularly important. Their participation is crucial, as well, for building young people's commitment to community involvement and service, an important goal of many youth development programs.

Can well-implemented programs improve academic achievement?

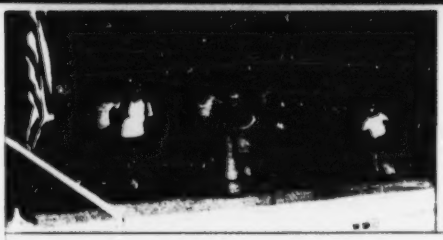
A September 1998 report sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation looked at student achievement as part of an attempt to map the terrain of existing school-community partnerships. In *Learning Together: The Developing Field of School-Community Initiatives*, the authors looked in depth at 20 nationally recognized initiatives. All of them had after-school activities as at least one component of their overall program.

An important finding was that "in most school-community initiatives, results-based accountability is still in its beginning stages. School success is a broad goal in virtually every initiative, but it is not routinely spelled out as a bottom line result that initiatives hold themselves accountable for achieving."

Many studies show that young people in a particular after-school program did improve at school, both in terms of behavior and some measure of academic performance. To date, however, very few of these studies had been done in a manner that researchers would agree provides proof that the program itself was the cause of the improvement. To be substantiated, such "cause and effect" relationships require a control group of like subjects who have not had the same experience. The nature of after-school programs—in which participants choose to be there—combined with the changing dynamics within classrooms and schools today, make it very difficult to create such control groups.

The Mott study noted that while the number of initiatives was "increasing exponentially," the knowledge about existing programs was insufficient "to support the rapid development of new initiatives and to ensure that knowledge and practice in this field are captured, made widely available, and expanded."

This lack of quantifiable evidence, coupled with the growth of standards-based systems of assessment and accountability in the schools, helped to shape the state and federal initiatives that began in 1998. Government funding and leadership has begun to address and support after-school programs more systematically, and to require that student



Chula Vista

Chula Vista After-School Program and Collaborative

Number of schools: Four elementary and five middle schools, plus one continuation high school; also, five Family Resource Centers.

Number of young people served: 600–700 elementary and middle school students. High school students served: just opened so no statistics available yet. Additional families served by resource centers: 2,640.

Funding: State, county, city, and school districts are primary funders. Total cost: After-school programs, $550,000 a year; family resource centers, $1.5 million a year.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. Most of the homework centers have credentialed teachers augmented with after-school program staff. Middle schools have a coordinator who works with the school staff.

Chula Vista focuses on community, thanks to Healthy Start

Chula Vista connects its after-school programs to other community-building efforts. The program began with a Healthy Start grant, which focused on the health needs of children and families. The grant supports a coordinator and a secretary or social worker at each school site.

The Chula Vista Coordinating Council—which includes representatives of the agencies, resource centers, and parent volunteers—helps the groups and programs work together to write grants, pool resources, integrate services, and provide training.

"Healthy Start was an incredible stepping stone," says Mary Jo Buettner, director of both Chula Vista's Coordinating Council and the Beacon Family Resource Center. "It's almost a set-up. They give you money and then you have to sustain yourself. It's laborious, but it gets people going. Each school wrote its own grant for Healthy Start. It was not top down, but grassroots."

By pooling resources through the Coordinating Council, the Chula Vista program provides seamless after-school care, adult education support, and other family resources to the community. Through melding funding streams, Buettner is able to "use the money the way it needs to be used to support the total program, but we may never pay for a whole staff person through one grant."

Each funder requires different reports on different information and outcomes. "It drives us nuts," Buettner says. "It's a paperwork headache, but it doesn't hurt the program."

A major constraint faced by Buettner is the daily scramble to keep the current programs going. "We're spending all our money on sustainability instead of program development," she laments.

Adult success may mean higher achieving children

Buettner says a lack of funding hampers evaluation efforts, but she sees a connection between adult participation and student success. "We believe that if mothers are involved in the school beginning in kindergarten, the kids do well and the dropout rate decreases, but no one wants to study that," she says.

There is evidence that children of the parents in adult education classes have better overall attendance in school, Buettner adds. About a third of the parents engaged in the internship programs provided by the Family Resource Centers find jobs.

Key studies and reports about the effectiveness of after-school programs and school-community partnerships prior to 2001

Community Counts: How Youth Organizations Matter for Youth Development. A report on 10 years of research looking into how community-based organizations contribute to the success of youths growing up in challenging settings. Milbrey W. McLaughlin. Public Education Network. 2000. Ordering information at: www.PublicEducation.org

Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs. This report presents "positive research and examples illustrating the potential of quality after-school activities" and details some of the characteristics of successful programs. United States Departments of Education and Justice. April 2000. The full text is available at: www.ed.gov

The Future of Children: When School Is Out. A compendium of articles, written by national experts, on key issues related to after-school care, including the unmet need and challenges of program quality. The David and Lucille Packard Foundation, Los Altos, California. Fall 1999. Ordering information and downloadable copies at: www.futureofchildren.org

Review of Extended-day and After-school Programs and their Effectiveness. This report reviews the effectiveness of 34 after-school programs and lists components for effective programs. Olatokunbo S. Fashola. Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). Report #24, October 1998. A downloadable copy of the report is available at: www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/crespar.html

Learning Together: The Developing Field of School-Community Initiatives. Reporting on a project that maps 20 nationally recognized school-community initiatives, this publication considers their impact on educational quality and makes recommendations for policy and practice. Atelia Melaville. Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. September 1998. An executive summary is available at: www.mott.org

Information regarding state and federally funded programs

Evaluation of California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Programs: 1999–2001. This January 2002 publication summarizes an evaluation of California's program conducted by the University of California–Irvine. California Department of Education. Copies and other information about the program are available at: www.cde.ca.gov/afterschool

General information about the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program including evaluations, state specific information, and updates on the law are available at: www.ed.gov/21stcclc

EdSource offers a Resource Guide

Accompanying this report is an EdFact—*Resource Guide: Creating a Quality After-School Program.* If you do not have a copy of this EdFact, it can be downloaded from the EdSource website: www.edsource.org

achievement measures are integral to program evaluations. Notwithstanding the challenges described above, these programs are beginning to yield stronger documentation regarding the connections between out-of-school time and student performance.

In January 2002 the CDE reported "positive improvements in student achievement, attendance, and student behavior" among young people who attended the state's After School Partnerships Programs in 2000–01. The results were part of an evaluation conducted by the University of California–Irvine. In particular, the report spotlighted strong improvement in reading test scores among the state's most high-risk students, including those initially in the lowest 25 percent on the Stanford-9 portion of California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. It also spotlighted "improvements in school attendance, which have been particularly impressive among students having the highest number of absences prior to participating in the program."

Of particular interest to researchers, UC–Irvine's full report of the evaluation also included results from "matched pair comparison" studies done in Santa Ana and Los Angeles Unified School districts. These studies, which compared students who attended after-school programs with similar students who did not, again showed positive outcomes in terms of student behavior, attendance, and performance.

The U.S. Department of Education publishes summary data for each state, based on annual data reported by grantees. The latest summary was released in November 2001. This report records changes in program participants' academic achievement between 1998–99 and 1999–00. For California elementary and middle/high school students tested in consecutive years, preliminary analyses of math and English test scores and classroom grades indicate positive changes, particularly in grades. Further analyses are being conducted as part of the national evaluation of the program, and findings are due out later in 2002.

As these reports indicate, assessments of students' school performance are now routinely part of the evaluation process for publicly funded out-of-school programs, and for many private funders as well. Test scores are commonly used along with other measures of academic success—such as school attendance, course taking, improvement in classroom grades, college acceptance, and English language mastery (for English learners)—which can provide a picture of student achievement that goes beyond test performance. Still other objectives, like those McLaughlin used, remain important though harder to quantify. This is again a place where clear program goals are important because they lead to effective evaluation and

thoughtful selection of performance measures. In addition, both school and program staff may need additional training in order to effectively collect and analyze the data, and then use it to improve their operations.

What is needed to develop and sustain effective programs?

In its 1998 report, the Mott Foundation also asks what is necessary for partnerships such as after-school programs to "make the transition from a novel innovation—easy for funders and policymakers to support in the short term—to a matter-of-fact necessity that neither schools nor community could imagine being without."

A stable, sustainable source of funding seems essential. Equally important will be the vision, leadership, and community partnerships necessary to create and run strong, effective programs. Finally, the long-term viability of these initiatives depends on the creation of well-crafted policies that are clear and realistic in their objectives, and that support the creation of quality programs tailored to diverse local needs and communities.

Stable, adequate funding remains elusive

Certainly, many families pay the full cost of after-school care and activities for their children. But the ability to pay dramatically affects a family's choices and the quality of the options they can consider. Public and community-based support of out-of-school programs has been targeted to disadvantaged children for whom fee-based options are less accessible, or in some cases completely unavailable.

Currently, most subsidized after-school programs depend on both a core source of support and various additional funding streams as augmentation. In its 1998 exploration of school-community initiatives, of which after-school programs are a part, the Mott Foundation found that core support came from four main sources. These included allocations from state legislatures, nonprofit organizations, local government including cities and counties but not schools, and pooled funds. The latter refers to initiatives

San Jose

San Jose LEARNS

Number of schools: 19 elementary schools and two middle schools in six school districts. (In addition, homework centers are currently in 180 of the city's 201 elementary, middle, and high schools, with the goal of having centers in all schools by June 2002.)

Number of young people served: 1,400 each day. (The homework centers are currently serving 25,000 kids a day.)

Funding: $1.6 million from a state After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program grant; $1.6 million from the city (including money from tobacco company settlements). Additional federal funds for six schools through 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants. School districts also contribute facilities, custodians, and often teachers and teacher aides.

Coordination with schools: The principal sits in on hiring interviews of the site coordinator and has as much say as the city. The principal and site coordinator also determine which programs to offer after school, such as Aztec dancing, Afro-Brazilian drumming, or robotics. The relationship of the coordinators to the staff varies by site, but often coordinators meet with the teachers, get homework packets, and put children's homework in the teacher's in-box if a child is having difficulty turning it in. Sometimes teachers or teacher aides staff the program.

The community plays a big role

LEARNS (Literacy, Education, Art, Recreation, Nurture, Students) is an outgrowth of the San Jose Schools/City Collaborative, which was looking at ways to commonly use open space and playgrounds. School districts, community organizations, and the city make up the collaborative. Although originally focused on safety, the goal of the current program is to create enriched and engaged learners.

Funding is complex

The primary funding streams from the city and state are melded with other grants, including federal money, at each site. One school has a grant for a reading recovery program. Another school uses Migrant Education money to hire credentialed teachers to staff the program. Community groups, such as art and children's museums, contract with the city to provide six- to eight-week programs.

The city manages the after-school program. Because state money is based on average daily attendance (ADA), the city has an agreement with the school districts that any losses will be split evenly. So far, says program manager Marie Alberry-Hawkins, there have been no losses. Alberry-Hawkins coordinates the state money. Another city staff member handles the federal contribution. Money for the homework centers in each school, which is handled through the city's parks and recreation department, is funneled through City Council member budgets.

Early evaluations show positive results

Alberry-Hawkins is in the middle of evaluations for the state program, which are based on Stanford-9 scores. The results show significant increases in math and reading scores, she says. In addition, attendance has improved. In one school, she reports, attendance went up by 20%. She also recently learned of an evaluation from one of the program participants. While struggling to come up with a sentence to show he understood a new vocabulary word, one student wrote: "LEARNS is my sanctuary."

The central question about after-school programs remains the extent to which they should be publicly funded over the long term.

that combine existing allocations from multiple government sources. This was prior to the creation of the federal CLC program.

In addition, the foundation found that most programs also raise a portion of their own operating costs. This often includes some "fee for service" arrangement, perhaps on a sliding scale based on family income. Grant writing can help support special projects. Local fund raising—of the kind often done in schools with product sales and events—can help with an immediate funding need. The drawbacks are that it is both labor intensive and a short-term solution.

Major public revenue streams—most of which are targeted to disadvantaged children—represent the most lucrative option and one that promises long-term sustainability, according to the Mott report. Absent funds earmarked for after-school, the report characterized money from programs such as Title 1, community development block grants, and Medicaid as crucial parts of the funding stream. Pooling resources also provides the possibility that the funds will be used more efficiently, as demonstrated in the Healthy Start approach.

It is difficult to arrive at a clear estimate of what it could cost to expand after-school programs to all the young people who need them. What is clear is the extent to which, absent publicly funded efforts, the neediest students and families have few options. Further, current funding levels will not provide programs for those students in all the schools and communities that want them. A weakened economy may inhibit continued growth in funding in the short term.

The central question about after-school programs, however, remains the extent to which they should be publicly funded over the long term. The federal CLC funding model is for one-time grants of three to five years, with the idea that programs will sustain themselves by developing other funding streams. The state's program provides three-year grants that are renewable. Nonetheless, the long-term government commitment is unclear, as is the potential for sustaining these programs without that funding. Rural programs, in particular, seem to face a daunting challenge in finding community partners outside the public sector.

Public sentiment, at least as measured by one poll conducted by after-school advocates, may be for government to continue and expand its funding commitment. The Afterschool Alliance reported in July 2001 that nine out of 10 voters polled said there should be a national commitment to ensure that "every child has a space in an after-school program." Further, eight out of 10 said that all taxpayers should share the responsibility of paying for those programs. Two-thirds said they favored raising their own taxes to do so.

Skeptics note that such support in a poll is quite different from political activism, especially where higher taxes are concerned. Questions also arise regarding the wisdom of pulling resources from other services in order to fund activities after school, including the core K–12 education program or preschool for children under 5. The hope of advocates is that the public support translates into additional funds for children's services generally and that program development will also result in better use of those funds that are currently available. Those sponsoring the initiative on after-school programs slated for the November 2002 ballot address this concern specifically by calling for the program funds to not be taken out of K–12 dollars.

Leadership is needed to develop and sustain quality

Even given unlimited funding, it is still not clear that high-quality after-school programs could be successfully created on the kind of scale advocates are calling for. Nor is it certain that such programs could substantially address the academic achievement gap that concerns school reformers.

At the heart of these questions of program effectiveness lies the ability of local providers to envision, create, and sustain programs that make a positive difference for young people both academically and in youth development terms. And they must do more than that. They must find the magic combination of services and activities that will attract and engage their particular community, keeping in mind that after-school programs are by their very nature voluntary.

Building a stable and sustainable program worthy of community support requires both management skills and effective community outreach. Such a program must also work to

help schools meet their goals around student achievement and help strengthen communities' abilities to support those goals.

To work together, schools and community groups must overcome challenges

For the promise of after-school programs to be realized, schools and community-based organizations will need to forge partnerships that are effective and mutually respectful. They start from a strong position, sharing the goal of improved results for the children in their care. But they have many challenges to overcome.

In an impassioned article in Phi Delta Kappan in 1997, researchers Michael Timpane and Rob Reich make the case that the community and schools together create an ecosystem for youth:

> "School reform cannot succeed without community development... By making schools the sole focal point of change, reformers have ignored the place where reform may do the most good to redevelop and revitalize the entire environment for children—the community.
>
> "...In our vision of community development, schools cease to be the default agency for youth services and can concentrate on teaching and learning. The new, integrated, collaborative model of services will certainly require new structures of power sharing and control that will be difficult for schools to accept. But in the long run, the new vision of coordinated services will lift a large burden from schools and leave them with more freedom to pursue their core academic goals...The relationship between community development and school reform is reciprocal."

The challenge of connecting the two worlds of community and education are explored more thoroughly in *Education and Community Building: Connecting Two Worlds*, a 2001 report published by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL). The report begins with the premise that community builders and educators are isolated from each

Sacramento

Sacramento START

Number of schools: 37 elementary schools from six school districts. (The Sacramento City School District also has a program targeted for middle schools that is not part of START.)

Number of young people served: 4,000.

Funding: Primary funding is a state After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program grant for $8 million over three years, plus support from the school districts and City and County of Sacramento. Total annual cost: $5 million.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. The principal is part of the team that hires the site coordinator. The site team (principal, classroom teachers, literacy coach, and START staff) develop and align classroom curricula and the START literacy program. Literacy coaches are recruited from the school and serve as liaisons with the school staff. School instructional aides often work as program staff.

Multiple funding sources build sustainability

Sacramento START began at the urging of Sacramento City Council members with money from the Cable TV Commission. Now a significant amount of START's annual budget is from a state grant.

START Manager Marie Dixon, who is also a city parks and recreation manager, says START receives funds from a number of sources including the county, city, and school districts. Private nonprofit and for-profit groups contribute to the program. Art instruction is offered by a local museum, and a curriculum based on newspapers is donated by the *Sacramento Bee*. These multiple funding sources work together so "everyone provides what they do best," Dixon says. "This approach is designed for long-term sustainability."

Program tries a "disguised learning" approach

The schools served by START are typically located in areas identified as the most disadvantaged in terms of poverty levels, unemployment, numbers of single and teen parents, low education levels, high dropout rates, and high incidence of crime and violence. The staff create an environment that encourages learning while having fun. Besides offering music and art, staff use games to help teach math and literacy. START supervisors face the challenge of retaining qualified staff. More focus is being placed on staff development and recruiting college students who are interested in becoming teachers, Dixon says.

Students show gains in math and attendance

Local independent evaluators Miniccuci & Associates looked at Stanford-9 scores and other data on START students. The evaluators reported gains in the students' math scores, with higher gains for English learners for the 2000–01 school year. The evaluators found a slight decline in reading scores for all students and English speakers. English learners' reading scores remained the same, which is a positive for the program, Dixon says, because non-native speakers who do not receive any help typically get farther behind English speakers as the school year progresses. The report also showed a steady gain in math scores for students followed for two years. In addition, evaluators found improved attendance for students in the program for two years, including those students labeled "problem attenders." The evaluation can be found at www.cityofsacramento.org/recreation/sacstart-evaluation2000-2001.htm

Mono County

Mono County After-School Program

Number of schools: Four K–8 elementary schools and one middle school.

Number of young people served: 150. No waiting lists.

Funding: Primary funding from federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants for $400,000 annually (for the four elementary schools); a state After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program grant for $40,000 a year (for the middle school); and $25,000 left this year from a Healthy Start grant of $400,000, which provided the catalyst for the program.

Coordination with schools: On school sites. At some schools, credentialed teachers are paid to work during after-school homework time with "opportunity children," who are having trouble but are not eligible for Special Education. At some schools, teachers receive a stipend to help all the program children do homework. Most of the programs rely on the students to say what their homework is. Staff read with children who do not have homework.

Transportation costs eat up rural budgets

In rural Mono County, "our version of parks and rec is campgrounds and roads," says Rosanne Higley, director of the after-school programs for the County Office of Education. "There are minimal youth sports—one sport a season where the kids maybe play four games and have practices if they can get the parents or a walk-on coach to hold them. Otherwise, we are it."

The five after-school program sites are a minimum of 25 miles apart, Higley says. And "there is no mass transportation here because there is no 'mass.'" The programs bought a van to take some children home when their parents, often working many miles away, cannot pick them up on time. "At one site, if there are more than six children needing the 20-mile ride, we have to use the school bus and pay the driver overtime," she says. All these expenses eat into an already lean budget.

Transportation issues also affect program content. One coordinator decided to have the children put on a Valentine's Day dinner for their parents. She wanted the kids to learn how restaurants set tables, fold napkins, and such. She had to charter a bus to take the children to the nearest restaurant, which was 25 miles away.

Attitude counts

Staffing is also an issue in rural areas. Although Higley requires college graduates for coordinator positions, her minimum requirement for all other positions is a high school diploma. Because people with college degrees are few and far between, they often are lured away by better-paying jobs, leading to high staff turnover. But, she found, sometimes attitude can make up for education. "I recently hired an academic/recreation coordinator with two years of college and lots of enthusiasm, and she is working out well," Higley says.

Program evaluations show positive or neutral effects

Higley, who recently took over her job as director of after-school programs, hopes to do more extensive evaluations in the future. Initial results, however, show the programs to have either a positive or neutral effect on the children in all areas, including academic performance.

other, particularly in high-poverty communities. For one, their central concerns are different. Schools want to improve academic achievement, and they often see community factors such as poverty as a key reason that goal is hard to attain. Community builders want to improve the lives of children, their families, and the communities where they live. They seek to build social and political capital through the empowerment of community residents, and to build physical and economic capital through the development of infrastructure, opportunities, and initiatives.

These goals are not at odds, but the styles and priorities of schools and community builders often are, according to the IEL report. The examples provided include the following:

- ✔ Differences in organizational structure, staffing, and climate between the two can lead to communication problems.
- ✔ Differences in role and expectations of leaders may contribute to friction between the two types of organizations and a mutual questioning of leaders' legitimacy.
- ✔ Differences in views about schools' purpose (academic achievement versus a broader educational scope and purpose) can create distance between objectives, or at least perceived distance.
- ✔ Schools are held much more accountable and thus may be unwilling to share power and resources with partners who they believe have less to lose.
- ✔ Schools respect institutional power and resources. CBOs focus on people power at the grassroots level and on relationships. This makes connections between the two difficult, but both institutional and people power are necessary for partnerships to succeed.
- ✔ Differences exist in their view of conflict. For schools, conflict often means that something is wrong. For CBOs, conflict can function as a valuable tool for change.
- ✔ Perspectives differ regarding the goals of parent involvement. Many schools see parents primarily as a second set of students they need to teach. Meanwhile, CBOs are more likely to see parents as advocates who can help schools do a better job.

✔ Schools want support from the community. CBOs want a two-way street, with schools also supporting them and giving resources back (buildings, for example).

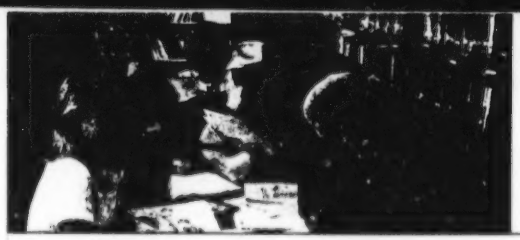
Even with the best of intentions, and a clear understanding of what is to be gained through cooperation, organizational partnerships can be difficult. Fundamental operating issues like control, objectives, and program focus are obvious hurtles that must be crossed. Conflict can also arise about seemingly mundane functional issues such as money, facility use and hours, and union contracts.

Child-care policy expert Michelle Seligson acknowledges these difficulties but also sounds a note of optimism. "The goal of providing extended learning opportunities to help students meet challenging academic standards joins a major learning goal of educators with the developmental objectives of youth-serving organizations and other social service providers," she says. "The challenges to smooth partnerships do not seem insurmountable. Indeed, many organizations, governmental jurisdictions, schools, and communities around the nation are working hard at resolving them and quickly growing many new programs for kids and their families during out-of-school time."

Can public support translate into quality programs and effective policies?

The public and its leaders—along with educators, child advocates, and the business community—appear to substantially agree that organized after-school activities are needed in the United States and, by extension, in California. In many ways, however, the jury is still out regarding what the objectives should be for these programs and how they should be funded and operated.

Several implementation challenges stand out as California decides to what extent it should scale up its public efforts to provide students with programs after school. If the state continues to strengthen its commitment, what shape should its support take? How can policy decisions best support the creation of quality programs that are tailored to diverse local needs, that are sustainable, and that meet the state's goals for student achievement



Eureka

Eureka After-School Program

Number of schools: five elementary and two middle schools, plus one alternative junior high/high school.

Number of young people served: 500 to 600.

Funding: Primary funding is a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant of $722,000 a year for three years; significant additional staffing resources come from AmeriCorps and CalSOAP as well as state reimbursement for intervention classes.

Coordination with schools: Intervention classes are taught by certificated teachers, often from the site. Some site coordinators have lunch with teachers, and most attend staff meetings. At some sites, teachers give homework instruction to coordinators.

The small-town program experiences big-city problems and benefits

The Northern California town of Eureka has a population of only 24,000 but has not escaped big-city drug problems, says Lois Beachy, school/community resources coordinator for the Eureka City School District. In some Eureka schools, up to 95% of the children receive free- or reduced-price lunches, she says.

Although Eureka faces many big-city problems, it also has big-city advantages many rural areas do not share: a four-year and a community college, a strong artist community, and "hundreds and hundreds" of private nonprofits. Beachy is seeking funding from the state for an "artist-in-residence" program next year, part of her efforts toward program sustainability. Each school is staffed with a site coordinator and college students.

Beachy credits energized and creative site coordinators with making the program work. "They hustle," she says. She looks for people with social work backgrounds as well as managerial experience. "With 80 kids running around and all these adults, you've got to have somebody with the training wheels off. These coordinators are the principals after school."

Beachy jumped at the chance to write a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant partly because her school district was facing declining enrollment. Parents were pulling their kids out of Eureka city schools and putting them in nearby districts that offered after-school programs.

Beachy wants the programs to "provide a meaningful, interesting, growth-producing experience for a child in a safe place. I want to see kids growing, excited. You have to watch the schools or they will kill kids with academics. If you throw another two hours on top of the regular school day, I'm not sure what you have achieved."

Intervention classes work

Beachy uses an outside evaluator, who works as a sounding board as well as giving feedback. After the first year, there was definite academic improvement across the board, especially for children in the intervention classes. "But sometimes it's hard to get a sense of what's going on because some kids may attend five sessions and other kids 25 sessions," Beachy says. Beachy and the evaluator will be looking at the effect on grades, test scores, and data such as writing samples. A lack of computer programs to sift data means doing some of this work by hand.

as well as other objectives related to safety, community development, and youth development? Work by researchers, the Afterschool Alliance, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and others suggest that California will need to address issues of practice as well as policy.

California needs to continue to develop its understanding of what constitutes a quality program. It is still unclear how out-of-school programs can be used most effectively to improve academic achievement without being more of the same "regular school day." Central to that is the proportion of time after-school programs spend focused on enrichment activities—including recreation, technology, civic participation, etc.—to pursue youth development goals that are important in their own right. While enrichment activities can be fun and engaging, they also can and should align with the academic standards of the regular school program.

The issues of adequate staffing present a substantial obstacle. As with the teacher workforce in California, the shortage of trained staff for after-school programs is of concern. Historically low wages and high staff turnover hamper program directors. In addition, the professional standards for staff would need to evolve along with the understanding of a quality program.

The governance and practical issues related to school-community partnerships call for continued debate and commitment. As they struggle with everything from facility-use issues to defining program goals, after-school program providers are learning more about the nature of cooperative agreements that yield the most effective results. That experience needs to be shared. Policymakers could encourage and support information systems, training, and technical assistance to help further this goal.

Strategies for providing stable core funding should continue to be explored. It is clear that out-of-school programs can and should draw on multiple funding sources. But what combination of sources is most feasible and cost-effective? And how can the multitude of public and private funding streams be combined in ways that work best for local program administrators? Further, what special efforts are needed to ensure that low-income students have adequate opportunities to benefit from organized out-of-school activities? Rural programs, with their small student numbers, transportation costs, and dearth of community partners present a different challenge.

Accountability and evaluation need to be built into program design. Clarity around program structure and goals is the key to developing meaningful program evaluation. Both policymakers and providers need to be clear about the outcome measures, including non-academic measures, that are necessary and/or acceptable for evaluation and accountability purposes.

Finally, California needs to build on the foundations already created. Extensive research points to key components of successful out-of-school programs. That research should be taken seriously as a good starting point. Policymakers would do well to create the guidance, resources, and regulations local providers can then use to develop programs that foster those components.

California has committed itself to improving the achievement of all its public school students. The federal government has also put its weight behind the notion of "no child left behind." Schools are caught in the spotlight created by those lofty expectations, yet they cannot be expected to carry the full burden alone.

Extending learning beyond the traditional school day is increasingly seen as an important strategy for helping students succeed. Out-of-school programs can also help engage the larger community and bring more resources to bear on the effort to improve student achievement. However, to the extent that California has limited capacity to improve its schools and support its young people, the costs and benefits of out-of-school programs must continue to be carefully evaluated. Integral to that is clarity about what the learning objectives realistically can and should include, and to what extent youth development goals are also of importance. By using those objectives as the measures for program effectiveness, local providers and state policymakers will learn more about the value the state is receiving in return for its investment. EdSource

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